

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
IO-14 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAB-02 EB-08 COME-00 OES-07
FMC-02 DLOS-09 CG-00 DOTE-00 SMI-01 CEQ-01 EPA-04
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, PBOR, PN, PQ
SUBJECT: PANCANAL BOARD MEETING WITH PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS

SUMMARY: THERE WAS WIDESPEAD AND FAVORABLE, BUT LARGELY
NON-SUBSTANTIVE, LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF FEBRUARY 10
MEETING BETWEEN PANAMA CANAL COMPANY BOARD AND
PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS. TORRIJOS' PUBLIC REACTION TO
BOARD'S LATER MEETING WITH HIM WAS ALSO FAVORABLE,
BUT HE CAREFULLY DISAVOWED ANY DIRECT LINK BETWEEN
THESE MEETINGS AND SENATE RATIFICATION DEBATE. END
SUMMARY.

1. ON FEBRUARY 10 THE PANAMA CANAL COMPANY BOARD
OF DIRECTORS, PRIOR TO ITS REGUALR SESSION HELD A
PRIVATE MEETING IN THE CANAL ZONE WITH A GROUP OF
GOP OFFICIALS. THESE INCLUDED MINISTERS FERNANDO
MANFREDO (PRESIDENCY) AND NICOLAS BARLETTA (PLANNING
AND ECONOMIC POLICY); RODRIGO "RORY" GONZALEZ, PERSONAL
ADVISER TO TORRIJOS; EDWIN FABREGA, DIRECTOR OF IRHE
(GOP ELECTRIC UTILITY); ARNOLDO CANO, DIRECTOR OF
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NATIONAL PORT AUTHORITY; ROBERTO HEURTEMATE; AND
AMBASSADOR TO U.S. GABRIEL LEWIS. GOVERNOR PARFITT
AND OTHER PANCANAL OFFICIALS WERE ALSO PRESENT.
AFTER THIS SESSION, BOARD FLEW TO FARALLON FOR LUNCHEON
MEETING WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS.

2. MEETING WAS COVERED FAVORABLY IN ALL LOCAL PAPERS

FEBRUARY 11. ARTICLES QUOTED GONZALEZ, CALLING THE SESSION "INFORMATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE", BUT SAID LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE. ONLY SPECIFIC POINT OF MEETING MENTIONED BY GONZALEZ WAS STABILITY OF CURRENT EMPLOYEES, OF WHOM HE SAID "WE WANT THE MAJORITY TO REMAIN AND WORK WITH US." HE SAID THE MEETING WAS HELD AT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY ALEXANDER'S INVITATION, IN RESPONSE TO SUGGESTIONS BY SEVERAL U.S. SENATORS THAT SUCH MEETINGS WOULD BE USEFUL.

3. AFTER HIS MEETING WITH BOARD, TORRIJOS GAVE A BRIEF TELEVISION INTERVIEW (FBIS/PANAMA PA 110253Y). HE DISAVOWED ANY SPECIFIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MEETING AND SENATE RATIFICATION DEBATE: "WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, THE CANAL MUST CONTINUE TO OPERATE. THUS, THIS IS MORE RELATED TO THE CANAL'S OPERATION THAN TO THE RATIFICATION." HE SPOKE FAVORABLY OF SECRETARY ALEXANDER, AND SAW THE MEETING AS A GENERAL SIGN THAT "THERE IS MORE INTEGRATION AND LESS STAYING BEHIND THE BARBED WIRE FENCES. YES, THERE IS A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TOWARD THE POSITIVE." HE SAID THERE WOULD BE MORE "INTEGRATION MEETINGS": "... NOW THEY ARE GOING TO APPOINT SUBCOMMISSIONS, ESPECIALLY ON THE SCIENTIFIC LEVEL... AREAS IN WHICH IT WILL NOT BE MISINTERPRETED THAT WE ARE ALREADY TAKING FOR GRANTED WHAT THE SENATE HAS NOT APPROVED." HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED COOPERATION
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ON ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECOLOGICAL SUBJECTS WITH "THE BARRO COLORADO SCIENTISTS" (I.E., PERSONNEL OF THE SMITHSONIAN TROPICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN THE CANAL ZONE).

4. ONLY SUBSEQUENT EDITORIAL COMMENT WAS IN SEMI-INDEPENDENT "ESTRELLA" FOR FEBRUARY 13. THIS CALLED THE SESSION "A PROFITABLE MEETING", WHICH WAS "VISIBLE PROOF OF U.S. GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN A TEAM EFFORT... INDEPENDENT OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO THE TREATY IN THE SENATE."

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Draft Date: 15 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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TAGS: EWWT, PBOR, PN, PQ, PANAMA CANAL CO, (TORRIJOS HERRERA, OMAR)
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